

CALIFORNIA SLAVIC STUDIES XV

# Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism

From the Golden Age to the Silver Age

Edited by

Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes,  
and Irina Paperno

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

Berkeley Los Angeles Oxford

University of California Press  
Berkeley and Los Angeles, California

University of California Press, Ltd.  
Oxford, England

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Cultural mythologies of Russian modernism: from the golden age to the silver age / edited by  
Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes, and Irina Paperno.

p. cm. — (California Slavic studies; 15)

Papers delivered at a conference held at the University of California, Berkeley, in May 1987,  
sponsored by the Center for Slavic and East European Studies.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-520-06998-6 (alk. paper)

I. Pushkin, Aleksandr Sergeevich, 1799-1837—Influence—Congresses. 2. Russian literature—  
19th century—History and criticism—Congresses. 3. Russian literature—20th century—  
History and criticism—Congresses. 4. Soviet Union—Intellectual life—19th century—  
Congresses. 5. Soviet Union—Intellectual life—20th century—Congresses. I. Gasparov, B. II.  
Hughes, Robert P. III. Paperno, Irina. IV. University of California, Berkeley. Center for  
Slavic and East European Studies. V. Series: California Slavic studies: vol. 15.

DK4.C33 vol. 15

[PG3355.5]

947 s—dc20

[891.71'3]

90-10906

Printed in the United States of America

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National  
Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials,  
ANSI Z39.48-1984. ♾

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## PREFACE

This volume contains papers delivered at a conference held at the University of California, Berkeley, in May 1987. The organizers wish to thank the Center for Slavic and Eastern European Studies for its support of this project. The editors also would like to express their appreciation to Hugh McLean for his counsel and encouragement, and to Sheila Wolohan, William Nickell, Cornelia Brown, and Glen and Irina Worthey for their help in editing and typesetting the manuscript.

We owe a deep debt of gratitude to the late Randy Bowlus, who produced this and many other volumes of California Slavic Studies. This was his last work and thus commemorates his contributions to the series over many years.

Pushkin is cited throughout according to: A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh*, Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, Moskva—Leningrad, 1949.

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I. P.

# Viacheslav Ivanov's Pushkin: Thematic and Prosodic Echoes of *Evgenii Onegin* in *Mladenchestvo*

CAROL UELAND

В младенчестве моем она меня любила  
И семистольную цевницу мне вручила.  
A. S. Pushkin, "Muza," 1821

Three Russian Symbolists consciously attempted to renovate the genre of the *poema* to write an autobiography in verse: Aleksandr Blok in *Vozmezdie* (1910–1921), Andrei Belyi in *Pervoe svidanie* (1921) and Viacheslav Ivanov in *Mladenchestvo* (1913–1918).<sup>1</sup> Unlike Blok or Belyi, Ivanov focuses his autobiography on his formative childhood experiences, from birth to the age of six, to describe the inception of his aesthetic sensibility and his calling to the vocation of poetry. All three poets found their generic models in Pushkin and employ numerous allusions to his works, especially *Evgenii Onegin*. Ivanov's *poema*, however, is unique in employing the verse form created by Pushkin for his novel, the so-called "Onegin stanza."<sup>2</sup> While this stanzaic tour de force may have come easily to such a master of the sonnet form in Russian poetry as Ivanov, the ornate language of Ivanov's pre-1912 works seems more stylistically incompatible with Pushkin than the style of either Blok or Belyi. *Mladenchestvo* interests us precisely because of the incongruity of Ivanov's style with Pushkin's poetics.<sup>3</sup> This basic incompatibility between the two poets is revealed in Ivanov's highly idiosyncratic understanding of *Onegin* and its author. My discussion here will focus on the thematic and formal aspects of the reminiscences from *Onegin* in *Mladenchestvo* and the superimposition of Ivanov's philosophical views onto Pushkin's characters from the novel. Before analyzing the *poema* in these terms, I shall examine the role of Pushkin in Ivanov's biography as well as in Ivanov's critical writings where he expounds his views of the poet.

*Mladenchestvo* begins with a vision, seen by Ivanov's mother when pregnant, that the child she is carrying is to be a poet. The poem ends with the confirmation of this vision at a ritual family event at which his mother opens the Bible to foretell the future and randomly selects a verse which identifies her child with King David, the archetypal Biblical model of the poet-prophet. According to Ivanov's "Avtobiograficheskoe pis'mo" (written

for the publisher S. A. Vengerov in 1917), in real life Ivanov's mother also provided a Russian role model for her young son, "Mother cultivated the poet in me, showing me portraits of Pushkin. . ." (SS 2:11). Along with such visual images of the poet, Ivanov grew up with Pushkin's "Poet" ("Poka ne trebuet poeta. . .") pasted to his bedroom wallpaper: "I took pleasure in constantly rereading and not understanding it" (SS 2:11). Unlike his younger Symbolist colleagues, Ivanov was old enough to witness personally the turning point in Pushkin's literary reputation, the unveiling of the Pushkin monument in Moscow in 1881: ". . . I stood, with a sinking heart, in front of the draped statue. . ." (SS 2:13). The experience itself evidently reinforced Ivanov's own belief in art as the unmediated disclosure of the Absolute: in the words of Ivanov's biographer, Olga Deschartes, "the falling of the coverings, the appearance of Pushkin's image struck his heart like the revelation of a magic secret" (SS 1:8).

Like other poets of the Silver Age, Ivanov's professional life periodically revolved around the commemoration of Pushkin at events and in publications. For the 1908 Vengerov edition of Pushkin's works, he wrote a commentary to "Tsygany" (SS 4:299-323). Ivanov read this article at the celebration of the 125th anniversary of Pushkin's birth at the Bolshoi Theater on June 6, 1924, which proved to be Ivanov's farewell appearance in his homeland before his emigration to Rome.<sup>4</sup> One of his closest friends was the noted Pushkin scholar M. O. Gershenzon, to whom he dedicated his next article on Pushkin, "K probleme zvukoobraza u Pushkina," (written in Rome in March-April 1925).<sup>5</sup> Ivanov commemorated the ninetieth anniversary of Pushkin's death with the lyric "Iazyk" (written on February 10, 1927), which he revised and published ten years later in connection with the hundredth anniversary.<sup>6</sup> This event was also the occasion for two more essays by Ivanov, "Roman v stikhakh" (which served as the introduction to an Italian translation of *Evgenii Onegin* published that year by Ettore Lo Gatto) and "Dva maiaka," originally given in Italian as a speech for the anniversary under the title "Gli aspetti del bello e del bene nella poesia del Pushkin" (SS 4:749-50). Ivanov's final outpouring of verse, his "Rimskii dnevnik 1944-go goda," included a lyric beginning with the famous opening line of *Ruslan i Liudmila*, "U lukomor'ia dub zelenyi. . .," written on January 27, the anniversary of Pushkin's fatal duel. To the end of his career, Ivanov continued to identify with Pushkin's images of the poet: he originally intended to title his last collection of verse "Arion," with the last four lines of Pushkin's lyric to serve as an epigraph to the volume which thereafter became *Svet vechernii* (SS 1:207).

In addition to the essays specifically devoted to Pushkin, Ivanov often chose Pushkin to illustrate premises of his major theoretical articles. In an early essay, "Poet i chern'" (1904) Ivanov suggests that, for his generation, Pushkin serves only as the historical marker of a consciousness of the modern split between the poet and the crowd, which "genuine symbolism" will reconcile (SS 1:709, 714). However, by the time of Ivanov's essay "O grantsakh iskusstva," written in close proximity to his work on *Mladenchestvo*, Ivanov has restored Pushkin as a role model for contemporary poetry as well. In Pushkin's lyrics describing the creative process Ivanov sees a precise description of his own notion of Apollonian inspiration, which is the moment when the diffuse sounds and images which the poet perceives find their ideal form (SS 2:630). In his analysis of Ivanov's essay "K probleme zvukooobraza u Pushkina," Edward Stankiewicz (1986:102) has observed that in contrast to the Romantics and early Symbolists for whom poetic inspiration was a form of "rapture," for Pushkin inspiration "meant a higher, more advanced stage of poetic creativity which required the participation of reason in the 'structuring of the parts with relation to the whole,' an understanding of inspiration which Ivanov clearly shared.

For Ivanov's most extensive treatment of "his" Pushkin, we must look to the 1937 articles, clearly companion pieces, which were published together in *Sovremennye zapiski* (lxiv, 1937) under the title "O Pushkine." Written late in Ivanov's career, these essays describe Pushkin in terms no longer familiar to most post-Formalist Pushkinists, a Pushkin whose paramount feature for Ivanov is his religious sensibility. In "Dva maiaka" (SS 4:330-342) Ivanov seeks to uncover the sources of Pushkin's creativity, locating in his writings and biography two "beacons" of inspiration, the first of which Ivanov identifies as "the inscrutable appearance of Beauty, once at some time—and for his whole life—radiating in the poet's soul" and the second "his belief in holiness, in the reality of the holy life of select people, who escape from the world 'to the vicinity of God.'"

In describing the first beacon—Pushkin's apprehension of the beautiful—Ivanov maintains that it is neither an abstract philosophical conception nor a recollection of tangible experience. Following his mentor, Vladimir Solov'ev,<sup>7</sup> Ivanov distinguishes between two planes of experience in Pushkin's creative process, even in those cases where there seems to be an opaquely biographical source, such as the inspiration for the lyric "Ia pomniu chudnoe mgnoven'e":

...even depicting 'the beauty' who had completely captivated him, the subject of his ardent desires, it was as if he involuntarily differentiated her



desired bodily substance from an essence radiating from her and not enshrouded. . . —an essence, 'higher than the world and passions,' that 'sacred thing of Beauty' before which even the lover, hurrying to an arranged rendezvous, suddenly stops and 'devoutly reverences.'

Like Solov'ev (1898:16), who maintained that Pushkin "understood that *beauty is only the tangible form of goodness and truth*" [Solov'ev's italics], Ivanov also insists on a traditional unity of absolutes as the basis of Pushkin's aesthetics:

. . .the poet also proclaims the oneness of the nature [*edinoprirodnost'*] of Beauty and Good. . . according to Pushkin, Beauty is revealed by the means of genius, and genius is a gift of Heavenly Grace, only working in harmony with Good.

However, he stops short of fully identifying Pushkin's views with the formative sources of his own aesthetics:

Pushkin would not repeat, would, perhaps, not even understand Dostoevskii's ecstatic words, 'Beauty will save the world.' This sober and balanced mind, Hellenic in nature, this talent, inclined to cultivate the paradise of the arts rather than extend its boundaries, did not know the dreams of 'theurgic' art which Vladimir Solov'ev invoked. . .

Unlike many readers of Pushkin of his generation, including Solov'ev and Merezhkovskii, Ivanov does not see Pushkin's poetry as the forerunner of a new, prophetic art and rejects those readings of "Prorok" which see in the persona of the poem an ideal image of the poet. According to Ivanov this lyric depicts not the divine bestowal of artistic powers but the conversion experience of a visionary, a fundamental change in the character's psychological make-up, utterly alien to the intermittent nature of poetic inspiration as he understood it.

But in the creative process, as a counterpoint to the ascent of inspiration, the poet also arrives at a state of creative exhaustion, a darkness of the soul, which must look outside of Beauty to revitalize itself. For Ivanov, this "cold dream" is the poet's "main enemy, the most evil of the demons: the poet called it 'boredom' [*skuka*], 'secret boredom,' 'melancholy' [*toska*], 'despondency' [*unynie*], the latter being its canonical name in the list of mortal sins." Ivanov sees this alternate state as generating the darker moments in Pushkin's opus. "No other poet—except perhaps Baudelaire or Verlaine—has expressed with as much force as Pushkin the torments of repentance and spiritual distress. He perspicaciously peers into the dark depths, where murderous passions feed their roots, blossoming in an infernal garden of mortal sins." Ivanov sees much of Pushkin's work as an

investigation into the interrelatedness of sins, for example, the parallel nature of covetousness and passion in "Skupoi rytsar'" or of envy and murder in "Motsart i Sal'eri." Ultimately, for Ivanov, these are but thematic variants on the central story of classical tragedy, that of man's revolt against God.

What saved Pushkin the artist from the torments he depicts, according to Ivanov, was his vision of the second beacon, with the inception of a positive religious ideal in his work. Ivanov traces the origin of this process to Pushkin's creation of the character of the monk Pimen in *Boris Godunov*, citing a suggestive note Pushkin wrote on the draft of the play which reads, "drawing near to that time when the earthly has ceased to absorb me." For Ivanov 1828 is the pivotal date after which Pushkin's longing for a religious ideal becomes increasingly more visible in his work. As an example he cites Pushkin's development of the contrast between Onegin's "despair" and Tat'iana's longing for a simple life in his work on *Evgenii Onegin* in that year:

At the time when *Onegm* was being created, for the author the analysis of the hero imperceptibly turned into an examination of his own conscience; he already knew how to give it a name, depicting his murderous machinations, too close to the demon he knew of fastidious indolence and despondency, masked with arrogance. A longing for a distant, pure, holy life is heard in Tatiana's concluding words.

Ivanov finds a final confirmation of Pushkin's religiosity in the lyric "Ottsy pustynniki i zheny neporochny," written six months before the poet's death, which paraphrases a Lenten prayer to drive away "the spirit of despondent idleness," leading Ivanov to conclude, "Little by little a religious inclination of the soul became customary and found for itself a solely sufficient expression in church forms." Ivanov asserts that far from having a minor role in Pushkin's biography and works, the longing for a holy life as expressed in his later works inspired Dostoevskii—whom he calls the poet's constant pupil and imitator—in his own interpretation of Russian religiosity.

Ivanov's other essay, "Roman v stikhakh" (SS 4:324–29) focuses on *Evgenii Onegin* alone. Like many Russian critics before him, Ivanov sets out to define the differences between Pushkin and Byron. He sees in *Evgenii Onegin* a new form of poetic narrative, fundamentally unlike Byron's *Don Juan*, which, while it suggested the possibility of the genre of a novel in verse to Pushkin, did not, in Ivanov's view, realize the potential of the form. In contrast, Pushkin's novel in verse suggested new paths for the development of the genre of the *poema* in opening up new subject matter.

According to Ivanov, what distinguishes Pushkin's work from his predecessor's is the fact that

Pushkin. . . saw in the novel a broad and truthful depiction of life, as it presents itself to the observer in its double aspect: as a society, with its stable types and manners, and as a personality, with its ever new ideas and claims.

Through this new form, poetry could now accommodate a new level of reality, the everyday and the customary. Ivanov contrasts Byron's *Don Juan*, which he sees as a form of personal confession and therefore "subjective," with the "objectivity" of Pushkin's work, which successfully creates the illusion of a multi-layered reality within the world of the novel, an effect achieved by the juxtaposition of the characters' stories with that of the narrator:

And since, especially in a novel the narrator, wanting to leave an impression of trustworthy evidence, must appear to the imagination of the readers no less lively than the characters themselves, precisely in order to achieve his objective goal, there was nothing else for Pushkin to do but to be the most subjective: to be himself, to seem to play himself in the scene, to appear as a carefree poet, lyrically open, willful in his pronouncements and moods, carried away by his own memories at times to the point of forgetting the main subject. But—miracle of mastery—in this extraneous story and apart from it in the attractive frame with that greater clarity and brilliance of colors, with that greater freedom from the narrator and his autonomous completeness, in life wrapped up in itself, the characters and events step forward.

Thus in furthering the possibilities inherent in the form, Pushkin, in Ivanov's view, created in *Evgenii Onegin* the progenitor of the main stream of Russian narrative literature, whether verse or prose.

Like other critics, Ivanov locates in *Evgenii Onegin* Pushkin's "overcoming of Romanticism," as epitomized in the resolution of the two major characters' fates: "Tat'iana is a living refutation of unhealthy Romantic fantasizing [*khimerizm*]. In *Onegin* an arrogantly self-affirming egoism and moral anarchy are unmasked. . . ." Extending his contrast of the two poets, Ivanov furthermore denies any ironic or satiric intent on Pushkin's part:

Byron's naturalism, mocking and, at times, cynical remains in the sphere of satire; its roots, then, find their nourishment in so-called 'romantic irony,' a morbidly experienced consciousness of the irreconcilable contradiction between dream and reality. Pushkin, on the contrary, was in the habit of unexpectedly becoming lost in admiration of the most prosaic reality, it would seem; satire did not at all enter into his plans, and his whole spiritual make-up was alien to romantic irony.

Although appearing to be simply an observer of the social order, in fact Pushkin purposely diminished Byron's Romantic hero to the dimensions of a salon portrait:

And here, looking at us, in a true likeness is one of the ordinary Lucifers of everyday occurrence, awakened by the lion's roar of the great rebel—one of the countless souls, swirled around, like dry leaves, in the hurricane. The 'young acquaintance' whom the poet decided to 'sing of' (in fact he simply analyzes him), is an exceptional person; by his energy and elegance of mind he could even belong to people of the highest type; but, weakened by idle pleasure, darkened by pride, deprived of the gift of spontaneous creative power, he is defenseless against the demon of pernicious boredom and inactive despondency.

Thus, Onegin's tragic flaw fits into the larger survey of the theme of sin in Pushkin's works in "Dva maiaka." Again insisting that "Pushkin meditated profoundly on the nature of human sinfulness," Ivanov takes a serious view of Onegin as a tragic hero:

'Despondency' (*acidia*) is unmasked in *Onegin*; it is also 'depressing indolence,' 'melancholic idleness,' 'boredom,' 'ennui' [*khandra*] and—at the base of it all—the spirit's despair in itself and in God. That this condition, tolerated and fostered by man in himself, is a mortal sin, as the Church recognizes it, is manifestly apparent in the novel: after all it leads Evgenii to the act of Cain.

Ivanov finds support for his understanding of Onegin's "sin" in Dostoevskii's famous "Pushkin Speech," citing the lines, "he killed Lenskii simply from ennui, who knows, perhaps from ennui about the world's ideal. . . ."<sup>8</sup> In Dostoevskii's own fiction, Ivanov suggests, the reader will find a continuation and completion of the suggestive thematic potential of Pushkin's novel.<sup>9</sup>

Ivanov's interpretation of Pushkin's creative development and especially his reading of *Evgenii Onegin* may certainly strike contemporary biographers and critics of Pushkin as idiosyncratic, far from the mainstream of Pushkin studies. The overly repetitive style of these late essays only reinforces the sense of how oddly humorless is Ivanov's response to Pushkin's masterpiece, especially his denial of any satiric intent on Pushkin's part and the casting of Onegin as a serious tragic hero. As literary criticism it perhaps deserves the dismissal accorded most Symbolist writings on Pushkin by later critics.<sup>10</sup> Although Boris Tomashevskii was no less critical of Symbolist criticism of Pushkin than other scholars of his generation, he (1961:415) once suggested that the real value of this criticism lies in the light it sheds on each poet's creative use of Pushkin in his own literary work. Ivanov's essays frequently

serve as a commentary to his earlier poetry. Let us now turn to *Mladenchestvo* and see how these critical views of *Onegin* had been earlier incorporated into Ivanov's poem.

According to his own notes to the poem, Ivanov began writing *Mladenchestvo* in Rome on April 10, 1913 and completed the first forty-five stanzas by May 23. He added the final three verses more than five years later, on August 15/28, 1918.<sup>11</sup> At the time of writing *Mladenchestvo*, Ivanov was living in Rome with his step-daughter, Vera Shvarsalon, the daughter of his second wife, Lydiia Dmitrievna Zinov'eva-Annibal by her earlier marriage. Beginning in the autumn of 1912, they rented a small apartment on the Piazza del Popolo for about a year. The household included Ivanov's daughter Lydia (whose memoirs [1982:147-154] furnish one of the few accounts of this period in Ivanov's life<sup>12</sup>) and an infant son, Dmitrii, who had been born to Vera and Ivanov in July 1912. Surely the presence of such a young child in a small apartment helped to suggest the poem's subject matter. A visitor to the family in April, 1913, Evgeniia Gertsyk, recalls in her memoirs (1973:70) the following discussion of Pushkin and Dostoevskii:

In his attitude towards Pushkin, a chill was perceptible, in spite of his usual admiration of Pushkin's mastery. . . . But Dostoevskii he loved with an ever living love, although in a different way, than that [which he felt] for Pushkin, not as a reverential student. . . . But which Dostoevskii? Dostoevskii stands at the crossroads of too many roads—among them is one little-travelled, barely noticed track: Pushkin—Dostoevskii—Viacheslav Ivanov. This is the perception of holiness as beauty,—or beauty as holiness ('beauty will save the world'). It is sweet [*sladosnyi*] rapture in the contemplation of the world, not another one but *this one, here, which* all three of them selflessly (so differently) loved. *This world, this earth.* [Her italics]

Thus, key elements of Ivanov's essays of more than twenty years later had been already formulated at the time when *Mladenchestvo* was being composed.

Although details of Ivanov's life in Rome are sketchy, they suggest that this period was one of heightened concern about spiritual questions. He often debated the schism between Orthodoxy and Catholicism with his close friend, the Orthodox theologian, Vladimir Ern, who, according to Deschartes (Klimov 1974:18-21), dissuaded Ivanov from converting to Catholicism at this time. Ivanov's stay in Europe in 1912-1913 heralded a significant shift in his intellectual circle. Returning to Russia in the autumn of 1913, he settled not in Petersburg but in Moscow; the "Tower" period during which his apartment was the cultural center of Petersburg was definitely ended and with it Ivanov's role as literary arbiter in Symbolist and Acmeist circles.

In Moscow, Ivanov resumed active participation in the Moscow Religious-Philosophical Society, and his closest acquaintances were now leading figures of the Russian religious renaissance, such as Ern, Pavel Florenskii and Nikolai Berdiaev, rather than literary figures. Current religious issues and the historical role of Orthodoxy in Russian culture emerge as the major themes of his essays, thereafter collected in *Borozdy i mezhi* (1916) and *Rodnoe i vselenskoe* (1917).

At the same time as these changes in his life and intellectual orientation were taking place, Ivanov's poetry, beginning with that of 1912–1913, fundamentally changed as well. Most noticeable was the deliberate simplification of the more ornamental stylistic features of his earlier collections, *Kormchie zvezdy*, *Prozrachnost'* and *Cor ardens*. Both *Nezhnaia taina*, written in the summer of 1912, and *Mladenchestvo* struck Ivanov's contemporaries as marking a transition to a simpler lexicon, more straightforward syntax and a more direct relationship to the reader. Gumilev, reviewing *Nezhnaia taina* (1913:74–76), wrote: "His verse has acquired the power of confidence and impetuosity, his images—precision and color, his compositions—clarity and beautiful simplicity." An anonymous review of *Mladenchestvo*, signed P---r (1920:57) and probably written by Briusov, noted that the poem is "written in language typical of Viacheslav Ivanov of the last years: the grandiloquence [*velichavost'*] of his former style has changed into a strict simplicity, still far, however, from conversational speech in the elegance of its vocabulary and the complexity of its phrasing." Averintsev (1986:42–43) goes so far as to call this "decisive turn" in Ivanov's career a "new poetic."<sup>13</sup> In addition to stylistic modifications, Ivanov's poetry, like the essays of these years, adopts new thematic orientations, often treating political and historical motifs.<sup>14</sup> In *Mladenchestvo* Ivanov's lifelong interest in the question of the poet's relationship to his culture was now directed to his own family history. In his essay of 1912, "Mysli o simbolizme," Ivanov had written: "Obviously the Symbolist artisan is inconceivable; just as inconceivable is the Symbolist aesthete. Symbolism deals with man. Thus it resurrects the word 'poet' in the old meaning—of the poet as a person (*poetae nascuntur*). . ." (SS 2:609).

In the introductory stanza of *Mladenchestvo*, the narrator lays out a poetic credo in which the poet is depicted as a scribe recording memories, answerable to God, the Poet of the Universe, and ever conscious of the inner necessity of subordinating poetry to the "holy language of silence," a straining to the sounds beyond the phenomena of this world to the music of the spheres:

Вот жизни длинная миная,  
 Воспоминаний палимпсест,  
 Ее единая идея —  
 Аминь всех жизней в розах крест.  
 Стройна ли песнь и самобытна  
 Или ничем не любопытна,  
 В том спросит некогда ответ  
 С перелагателя Поэт.  
 Размер заветных строф приятен;  
 Герою были верен слог.  
 Не так поэму слышит Бог;  
 Но ритм его нам непонятен.  
 Солгать и в малом не хочу;  
 Мудрей иное умолчу.

Ivanov's poet-narrator strongly resembles Dante's image of the scribe in the "Proem" to his *Vita Nuova* (which Ivanov was translating at the time of writing *Mladenchestvo*<sup>15</sup>), copying from his book of Memory, who sees factual events as subservient to the essence of their meaning. Describing himself as a humble transposer, the poet acknowledges the distance between his own work and the rhythmic structure of the universe. The metaphors of the *mineia* and the palimpsest suggest two of the governing principles of the workings of memory in the poem as a whole. Like a *mineia* the poem presents a chronologically ordered succession of "saints" who have guided the poet's life: as the people who formed the child's earliest experiences appear, the narrator repeatedly underlines their iconic quality, for example in recalling his father ("Ottsovskii lik dusha nakhodit" XXX) or his nurse ("I v pamiaty rassvetno-rannei/ Mertsuet oblik voskovoi. . ." XIII). The palimpsest—a parchment on which previous texts have been imperfectly erased and whose meaning thus remains decipherable—evokes an image of trying to catch shreds of meaning under another graphic representation, a metaphor for the memory's struggle to discern the underlying formative experience and the artist's struggle to discern the underlying "logos," the original text.

In contrast to the solemn, laconic tone of this introductory stanza, the first line of the narrative abruptly shifts to a livelier, more familiar style:

## I

Отец мой был из нелюдимых,  
 Из одиноких, — и невер.  
 Стеля по мху болот родимых  
 Стальные цепи, землемер

(Ту груди звучную, чьи звенья  
 Досель из сумерек забвенья  
 Мерцают мне, — чей странный вид  
 Все память смутную дивит), —  
 Схватил он семя злой чахотки,  
 Что в гроб его потом свела.  
 Мать разрешения ждала, —  
 И вышла из туманной лодки  
 На брег земного бытия  
 Изгнанница — душа моя.

The rhythm and syntax of the opening line of *Evgenii Onegin* combined with Tat'iana's memorable epithet for Onegin ("No govoriat, vy neliudim" [V, 70]<sup>16</sup>) forge an immediate association for the reader between Ivanov's father and Pushkin's hero. Such direct allusions to Pushkin's text are comparatively rare in *Mladenchestvo*. Unlike Blok in *Vozmezdie* or Belyi in *Pervoe svidanie*, Ivanov does not weave many pointed allusions to Pushkin's works into his narrative, nor, despite the stylistic simplification noted above, does he generally alter his distinctive lexicon or syntax to make his line sound more like Pushkin's. Rather he suggests to the reader through such pointed echoes that the members of his family should be associated with recognizable literary types. The opening association of Ivanov's father with Onegin is not reinforced until much later in the poem. The following lines of the stanza seem to convey in a straightforwardly novelistic manner the barest facts of his father's occupation and the cause of his death. However, the closing lines also introduce a central notion of Ivanov's poetry, the Platonic image of the soul as an exile in earthly existence.<sup>17</sup> The structure of the stanza encapsulates the structure of the work as a whole by associating the father's death, dramatized much later in the poem, with the son's birth—two events which have no connection in time, but whose relationship forms the thematic center of the poem. Instead of the linear exposition of a typical family chronicle, in *Mladenchestvo* time operates in mythic patterns, revolving around repeated cycles of birth and death, one always immanent in the other.

The poet's mother, introduced in the following stanza, incarnates the qualities of what Ivanov termed the feminine principle in culture. Ivanov's views are most directly expressed in his article "O dostoinstve zhenshchiny" (SS 3:137–46):

Owing precisely to the great wealth of her own psychical powers, woman seemed to antiquity and to this day seems to male impressionability to be



a mysterious creature and unanalyzable in her final depths. An agreement seems to exist among all men—*consensus omnium virorum*—in this perception of woman as the unconscious keeper of some suprapersonal, natural mystery. We have grown accustomed to sense in this mystery the soul of the Earth-Mother, dark and prophetic.

The mother undergoes the first of the poem's many supernatural experiences:

## II

Мне сказывала мать, и лире  
 Я суеверный гот рассказ  
 Поведать должен: по Псалтири,  
 В полночный, безогзывный час,  
 Беременная, со слезами,  
 Она, молясь пред образами,  
 Вдруг слышит: где же? . . . точно, в ней  
 Младенец вскрикнул! . . . и сильней  
 Опять раздался заглушенный,  
 Но внятный крик . . . И мир был лес,  
 Живой шептанием чудес.  
 Душой, от воли отрешенной,  
 Удивлена, умилена,  
 Прияла знаменья она.

The mother perceives the baby's cry in the womb, a miracle usually reserved for saints and heroes, as a divine message directing her to raise the child to be a poet. She is able to discern a higher reality despite the illusions of earthly life: "Mat' iasnovidela vpot'makh,/ Mirskoi ne obol'shchalas' lozh'-iu" (III). Non-rational means of cognition—prophecies, dreams and visions—recur repeatedly in her own life and eventually in that of her child. They are also characteristic of Pushkin's heroine as described in *Onegin* (V, 101):

Татьяна верила преданьям  
 Простонародной старины,  
 И снам, и карточным гаданьям,  
 И предсказаниям луны.  
 Ее тревожили приметы:  
 Таинственно ей все предметы  
 Провозилашали что-нибудь,  
 Предчувствия теснили грудь.  
 Жеманный кот, на печке сидя,  
 Мурлыча, лапкой рыльце мыл:  
 То несомненный знак ей был,  
 Что едут гости. Вдруг увидя  
 Младой двурогий лик луны  
 На небе с левой стороны

The last line of the second stanza of *Mladenchestvo* cited above echoes Pushkin's closure in the following stanza of *Onegin* in its rhythm and syntax: "Zhdala neschast'ia uzh ona."

More than half of *Mladenchestvo* is devoted to the poet's parents, their backgrounds, courtship and the tension in the child's household arising from the opposition between his mother's religious vision and his father's equally archetypal male revolt against God. The family history presents thematic parallels with Ivanov's reading of *Onegin* as recounted above, notably Tat'iana's vision of a godly life and Evgenii's "sin of despair." While the mother's character remains fixed throughout the poem, the drama of the narrative derives from the father's progression from unbelief to a deathbed conversion. The further portrayal of the father includes epithets often used to characterize Onegin, although without the directness of the opening allusion (XV):

Он холодно-своеобычен  
И не похож ни на кого;  
Каким-то внутренним отличен  
Сознанием права своего —

or the phrase "mrachnei osennikh tuch" in (XX) or more pointedly "ugrium" (XXV), the word Nabokov (1975:II, 137) most associates with Onegin's "generic gloom." The place of the father's attempted rebellion against God, "v uedinennyi kabinet" (XXIV), is a direct quotation from Pushkin's text (V, 19). As the father's health declines, the true cause of his malady is revealed: "muchila ottsa toska" (XXXIV).

Hereafter the resemblance to Onegin ends. A long dormant religiosity, implanted in childhood ("On vsenoshchnoi, ot rannikh let, Liubil 'vechernii tikhii svet'" XXVII) is reawakened in the dying man by a vision of St. Nicholas:

## XLII

Затих; прояснился; лепечет:  
«Утешься: верую теперь.  
Причастье душу мне излечит.  
Меж тем как ты читала, в дверь —  
Я вижу, входит этот самый,  
Что строго так глядит из рамы. . .  
Ты вышивала? . . . Тот же вид!  
Подносит Чашу и велит  
За ним причастное моленье  
Твердить. Я начал. Вдруг меня  
Покрыла сверху простыня.

И заметался я, в томленьѣ  
 По Чаше, — а его уж нет. . .  
 Шли за священником, чуть свет!»

The details of this vision operate on both a realistic and symbolic plane: the communion chalice is kept covered until the proper moment and the enveloping cloth may literally be the priest's sleeves which enfold the communicant. However, in Ivanov's symbolic system the image clearly renders the desire to remove the veils which hinder man's communion with the Absolute, to perceive a higher reality. In the first lines of the following stanza,

Христос приходит. Ожиданья  
 Ей не солгали. Долгий час  
 За дверью слышались рыданья,  
 Перерывавшие рассказ  
 Души, отчаяньем язвимой,  
 Любовью позднею палимой  
 К Позвавшему издалека, —

Christ's arrival expresses the communicant's belief in the presence of the divine in the ritual and the conferring of sanctification on the sinner. The appellative given to Christ, "Pozvavshii izdaleka," reiterates the opening motifs of the soul's origin in another plane of existence and the otherworldly call.

Juxtaposed to the ongoing drama of his father's battle with God is the timeless world of the poet's childhood, which is repeatedly referred to as paradise or Eden. The title of the *poema* discloses its Orthodox orientation to time: the application of the word *mladenchestvo* to the first six years of life, while the standard nineteenth-century usage (Dal' 1881:2:332), also coincides with the first stage of human development in terms of responsibility to Orthodox Church ritual, the period before a child begins confession when he still retains his divinely originating innocence. Throughout the work the motif of the "holy language of silence" (silence designated as *molchanie* or *bezmolvie*) is linked to the vision of childhood as paradise by the sound associations of words with the etymologically unrelated roots *mol/mlad/molod*. (Ivanov recoins the Latin *infantia*, inability to speak.) His mother's prophecy that he is to be a poet therefore marks the end of this period in the child's life.

Ivanov's earliest childhood memory (XVII) is quite literally that of an Eden, as his first window on the world offered a view of the Moscow zoo, especially of the horns of the animals trying to break through their fences.

But as the narrator tries to probe even further back into his memory, he recalls as his most formative experience one which could not have happened in any actual sense:

## XX

Мечты ли сонные смешались  
 С воспоминаньем первых дней?  
 Отзвучья ль древние носились  
 Над колыбелию моей?  
 Почто я помню гладь морскую  
 В мерцаньи бледном — и тоскую  
 По ночи той и парусам  
 Всю жизнь мою? — хоть (знаю сам)  
 Та мгла в лицо мне не дышала,  
 Окна не открывал никто,  
 Шепча: «вот море» ... и ничто  
 Сей грезы чуждой не внушало.  
 Лишь поздно очи обрели  
 Такую ночь и корабли.

For Ivanov's narrator, as for Dante's, the factual details of an experience are less important than the essence of its meaning as he perceives it. The vision of the sea recorded here cannot be rooted in the objective phenomena of the child's world, but is no less real as a vestige of Platonic memory, a visual equivalent for detecting the sound waves of the "silence" of mystical experience:

## XXI

Но, верно, был тот вечер тайный,  
 Когда, дыханье затая,  
 При тишине необычайной,  
 Отец и мать, и с ними я,  
 У окон, в замкнутом покое,  
 В пространство темноголубое  
 Уйдя душой, как в некий сон,  
 Далече осязали — звон...  
 Они прислушивались. Тщетно  
 Ловил я звучную волну:  
 Всколеблет что-то тишину —  
 И вновь умолкнет безответно...  
 Но с той поры я чтить привык  
 Святой безмолвия язык.

Though denying its actuality, the narrator affirms the psychological authenticity of this moment of mystical communal experience with his parents.

The overall structure of the poem also illuminates the relationship between the generations in the implicit idea that the child's life will reproduce the pattern of his father's, the soul's turn away from and return to God that is the plot design of all Christian biography.<sup>18</sup> The father's struggles with God coincide with the child's period of natural innocence, when he retains intimations of immortality. As the father undergoes his visionary experiences, culminating in his return to Orthodoxy, the child progressively loses this original state of innocence and his world becomes increasingly clouded by the illusions of earthly reality, at one point again expressed by the motif of the falling curtains: "Zavesy padaiut glukhie/ Na pervozdanniy moi Edem" (XXVIII). In the penultimate stanza of the poem, the mother has a vision of her child's future path of struggle between good and evil as the child grows conscious of the duality of existence:

#### XLVII

Шесть весен... Видит у подножья  
 Высокой лестницы во сне  
 Магь духа тьмы и духа Божья  
 В бореньи трудном обо мне...  
 В старинной церкви Спиридонья  
 Родимой тонкого просонья  
 Являют новые струи  
 Простор пустынной соли  
 И два по клиросам кумира:  
 Тут — *ангел* медный, гость небес;  
 Там — *аггел* мрака, медный бес...  
 И два таинственные мира  
 Я научаюсь различать,  
 Приемлю от двоих печать.

Thus, the poem culminates in the birth of the child's earthly double:

#### XLVIII

Лобзает вежды луч янтарный  
 И пишет «радость» по стене, —  
 И полностью светозарной  
 Вдруг сердце замерло во мне!  
 Все спит. Безлюден двор песчаный.  
 Бегу в цветник благоуханный.  
 В цветах играют мотыльки,  
 Как окрыленные цветки.

Впервые солнечная сила,  
 Какой не знал мой ранний рай,  
 Мне грудь наполнила по край  
 И в ней недвижно опочила...  
 Пробился ключ; в живой родник  
 Глядится новый мой двойник...

In this moment of overflowing vitality, the loss of the child's early paradise is compensated for by his sense of the fullness of being or, as Gertsyk earlier noted, the "sweet rapture in the contemplation of the world," which Ivanov felt was his common inheritance from Pushkin and Dostoevskii. Through the *Onegin* allusions, connecting his personal history to Pushkin's novel—reinforced by the rhythm and rhyming patterns of the *Onegin* stanza—Ivanov adds a more familiar voice to that of his own narrator; this voice serves as a cultural mediator between his own experiences and those of his readers. The primary appeal of Ivanov's text as a form of autobiography would seem to lie largely in the authenticity of experience. However, by his addition of a layer of opaque literariness to the presentation of his family's story Ivanov effects that illusion of a multi-layered reality which he saw as Pushkin's achievement in *Evgenii Onegin*.

## Notes

1. V. I. Ivanov, 1918. Quotations from the poem in the text will indicate stanzas. The poem may also be found in Viacheslav Ivanov, 1971–1986 (*Sobranie sochinenii* hereafter *SS* in text) 1:230–254 and Viacheslav Ivanov, 1976:345–373.

2. I have dealt with a statistical analysis of Ivanov's use of the *Onegin* stanza in my dissertation, "Autobiographical *Poemy* of the Russian Symbolists: Aleksandr Blok's *Vozmezdie*, Viacheslav Ivanov's *Mladenchestvo* and Andrei Belyi's *Pervoe svidanie*," Diss. Columbia University, 1990.

3. As Sergei Averintsev (1976:35–36) has noted, "Pushkinian clarity is alien to a Symbolist" and among the Symbolists, especially to Ivanov: "Viacheslav Ivanov seemed to want to overturn the historical victory of the 'Arzamas' over the hyper-Slavonicism of the 'Society of Lovers of the Russian Word,' to return, over Pushkin's head, to the pre-Pushkinian sources of Russian poetry."

4. For a further account of this occasion see *SS* 4:743–44.

5. The article first appeared in *Moskovskii pushkinist*, 1930. For an analysis see Stankiewicz, 1986:96–107.

6. For an analysis of this poem in connection with Ivanov's theories of language see Venclova, 1986:108–122.

7. For Solov'ev's views of Pushkin see William Todd's article in this volume.

8. He does, though, differentiate his reading of Onegin's sin from Dostoevskii's to a certain degree on this point: "While approximating this evaluation, Dostoevskii at the same time obscures the true nature of ennui-despondency [*khandra-unynie*] as the absolute emptiness and death of the spirit, confusing it with ennui-sadness [*khandra-toska*] about something, which not only is not a mortal sin, but evidence of the life of the spirit" (SS 4:329).

9. The one specific example Ivanov cites, though he admits its discovery is not original with him, is the parallel of Raskol'nikov's "exact and even literal program" in the following lines of the second chapter of *Onegin*: "vse predrassudki istrebia,/ my pochitaem vsekh nuliami,/ a edinitsami sebia;/ my vse gliadim v Napoleony;/ dvunogikh tvarei million/ dlia nas orudie odno."

10. For example, Viktor Shklovskii writes (1923:200–201): "New wine has been poured into the Pushkinian bottles. The bottles are still serviceable since art itself does not age, but the wine has already turned sour. The new interpretation advanced by the Symbolists, derived from Dostoevskii. . .has already become a cliché."

11. Since Ivanov did not consistently date his works, when he does it is usually not without significance. The date of the poem's completion occurred on the Orthodox holiday of *Uspenie* or the Dormition of the Virgin, which, as discussed below, is connected to Ivanov's mother's role in the poem as the bearer of spiritual values.

12. See also Gertsyk 1973:37–72.

13. For an opposing view see Tamarchenko, 1986:91.

14. After *Nezhnaia taina* and *Mladenchestvo* Ivanov's output of lyrical poetry decreased markedly for the next few years. Of these poems basically only those of the cycles "Lebedinaia pamiat'" and "Moi dom" were retained or reworked for his last collection *Svet vechernii*. With the recent republication of the other poems of this period in SS 4 the extent to which the poetry of 1914–1918 constitutes responses to the events of the First World War and the Revolution is now evident.

15. Ivanov had offered to do the translation in a letter to the publisher Sabashnikov and signed a contract with him in April, 1913 (see Davidson 1982:104). Part of it appeared as the introduction to Ivanov's article "O granitsakh iskusstva," in *Trudy i dni*, 7 (1914).

16. The appropriateness of this word to describe Onegin's character was even the subject of correspondence between Pushkin and Viazemskii. See Nabokov 1975 2:390-391.

17. "Na breg zemnogo bytiia" is in fact a self-citation from Ivanov's translation of Novalis (SS 4:692).

18. In his "Avtobiograficheskoe pis'mo" Ivanov relates his youthful flirtation with "extreme atheism" SS 2:13-14.

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